

# E GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917

CALIFORNIA  
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

FEB 27 2007

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Bob Lewis

American Kestrel, one of the raptors killed by the Altamont wind turbines.

## GGA Wins Protections for Altamont Birds

**O**n January 11, Golden Gate Audubon successfully settled a lawsuit against the County of Alameda—and finally won greater protection for birds at Altamont Pass. This settlement comes after a nearly three-year campaign to force the wind-energy companies to address the illegal and unacceptable bird kills that have plagued the wind resource area since its creation in the 1980s. The agreement also constitutes the toughest avian protection requirements ever imposed on the wind industry at Altamont Pass.

For two decades, the wind turbines at Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area have generated power for the Bay Area at an unacceptable price, as thousands of birds have died each year in the turbines' spinning blades. One of the oldest wind farms in the United States, Altamont sits in the middle of an important migratory flight corridor and immediately adjacent to the densest known Golden Eagle nesting territory in the world. Scientists estimate that up to 4,700 birds, including 1,300 raptors—more raptors than at any other wind facility in North America—are killed each year by the turbines.

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## San Francisco CBC Reports Rarities

**S**evere winds marked the day before the 2006 San Francisco Christmas Bird count, but count day, December 28, was somewhat milder, with gusts up to 33 miles per hour in the eastern part of the city and nearly calm conditions in some areas in the interior of the peninsula and along the ocean coast. Ocean flocks of scooters, loons, and grebes were disbursed, so coastal areas had low counts for those birds. On the other hand, winds seemed to have pushed large numbers of Red-throated Loons to the coast, giving us a high count of 765. The only Red Phalarope was likely near the shore because of the winds as well.

The species total of 171 was on the high side, and the total number of 54,439 birds was in the range expected for our area. This year, we had 100 birders in the field and 3 more at feeders.

Count highlights include two spectacular species. The Northern Waterthrush in Golden Gate Park on count day was a first for the count. An incredibly well-documented Hammond's Flycatcher at the Sharps Park Golf Course on count day was our second record for the species.

Beyond those sightings, the list of rarities is impressive. Overwintering neotropical and southern migrants made up the bulk of the sightings. Nashville, Hermit, Black-throated Gray, Palm, Black-and-white, and Yellow Warblers, and a count week Wilson's Warbler,

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

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# GGA Members Lobby New Congress

Population growth, women's empowerment, and international family planning—what do these issues have to do with bird and wildlife conservation? A lot, according to the conservationists and public policy advocates at the National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Izaak Walton League (IWL). So much that in late 2006 NAS and IWL invited conservationists from across the country to a workshop exploring the connections between human population and wildlife habitats.

Golden Gate Audubon member Brandi Gartland and I were among the 20 attendees at the workshop, held at the NAS public policy headquarters in Washington, D.C., December 3–5. For two days Brandi and I worked with NAS and IWL staff to learn about international family planning issues, the federal budget, and how to lobby Congress. We developed connections between population growth and its ecological consequences, and geared up for meetings with representatives and senators in an attempt to increase funds for federal population programs.

The connections between population growth and habitat loss are many: High population growth rates put strain on natural resources, such as forests and water supplies, often with devastating consequences for birds and other wildlife. Lack of access to voluntary family planning limits women's reproductive choices and stresses both families' economic situations and the natural resources on which they depend for survival. Health care costs increase without access to population programs, reducing funds available for environmental conservation efforts.

Just a modest amount of international aid for family planning services can work to reverse these negative impacts. A recent study in Latin America, for example, showed that each dollar of aid given to population programs for those who desire them the most saves more than \$12 in health care, infrastructure, and environmental costs down the road. "With a federal budget of over \$2 trillion, less than 1 percent of it goes to international assistance," Brandi noted. "Even with such a small amount received by these programs...what a huge difference that can make."

Sadly, adjusted for inflation, funds for international family planning programs have decreased each year since 1995. With the recent changes in congressional leadership, many conservationists are hopeful that this trend can be reversed. "If we could provide enough family planning facilities and health centers, we can meet the needs and wants of the people," said Gartland.

NAS and IWL members agreed, so we went to voice our concerns to elected officials. After visiting with the staffs of Representative Barbara Lee of Oakland and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, we emerged hopeful for congressional action. The staff members we talked with were knowledgeable about the issues and supportive of our requests for additional federal dollars for population programs. Although some were a bit taken aback that conservation groups would be coming to lobby for international family planning programs, they understood the connections between population growth and bird and wildlife habitat conservation. So positive were our meetings that with the changeover in Congress we may see a reversal of the decade-long decline in financial support of these programs.



GGA member Brandi Gartland (left) with Aysha House-Moshi, senior policy advisor to Representative Barbara Lee.

Michael Martin

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# Sun Shines for Oakland CBC

**S**tarry skies and near-calm air greeted early morning owlers on Sunday, December 17, 2006, and pleasant weather continued throughout Oakland's 66th annual Christmas Bird Count. On foot, and in cars, boats, canoes, and golf carts, 210 birders—more than ever before—split into 69 separate groups and birded hard from 6:30 in the morning until 5 in the evening. Another 13 birders counted in their backyards and contributed the majority of the White-throated Sparrows and Pine Siskins found this year. After sunset, nearly 100 birders gathered at the countdown dinner to enjoy Hospitality Chair Susanne Shields's wonderful dinner and to revel in recounting a highly satisfying day in the field.

Birders in the field and in their backyards counted more than 136,000 individual birds, 40 percent more than our recent 10-year average. This gain was due mainly to waterbirds. At nearly 34,000 birds, numbers of scaup were twice the recent average, as were Buffleheads, with nearly 5,500, and Double-crested Cormorants, with more than 3,500. Birders also found 3,000 more gulls than the recent average.

On count day we had 178 species, one more than our recent average. While the nice weather contributed to finding lots of birds, it may also have held down the number of vagrant species seen, a possibility noted by other California CBC compilers this season. Our best bird was a Swamp Sparrow found in the proposed Alameda Wildlife Refuge, only the third time since 1974 that this species has appeared. A Palm Warbler near Lake Merritt provided the third appearance of this species, and the Surfbird seen on Yerba Buena Island by North Boat birders was only the fourth. Other species found fewer than 10 times since 1974 included Ross's Goose, Lesser Yellowlegs, Common Murre, and Tree Swallow. Red-necked Grebe, Wandering Tattler, Long-billed Dowitcher, and House Wren, also found this year, had each occurred no more than five times in the last 10 years.

During count week—the period of three days on either side of count day—we found an additional two species. One was Ruddy

Turnstone, a species in decline along much of the Pacific Coast, and missed entirely on the last two counts. The 42 Horned Larks at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge hark back to the 1970s, when even higher numbers were common. During the last 20 years, though, Horned Lark has been found on only half the counts. (Note that our rare bird committee has not yet reviewed the unusual species mentioned above.)

This year 19 species reached record high numbers. No doubt some of these records stemmed in part from normal year-to-year fluctuations: Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk (tied with the 1974 count), Greater Yellowlegs, Acorn Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker,

numbers typically experienced only five years ago.

Record highs were also recorded for Bald Eagle, with six birds found, and Peregrine Falcon, with nine. These highs may be part of the slow but steady rebound of these predators since the United States banned the general use of DDT in 1972. Finally, three species that have colonized our area relatively recently also reached record highs. Red-shouldered Hawk first appeared in 1952, but the species was not found again until 1973, and numbers didn't exceed 10 until 1994; we recorded 43 this year. Pygmy Nuthatches first appeared in very small numbers in 1966 and 1967, but then not again until 1981. Counts didn't



*This Northern Saw-whet Owl, observed at Claremont Canyon at about 4:30 a.m. on December 17, was likely the first bird seen on the Oakland CBC.*

Black Phoebe, and Lincoln's Sparrow. For three species, normal fluctuations may also explain this year's high counts, but their increases were substantial: 50 percent higher than the previous record for Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and nearly twice as high for Townsend's Warbler and White-throated Sparrow. Highs for two species probably reflect widespread, continuing population increases noted in many urban areas: both American Crow and Common Raven counts were more than double the

exceed 50 until 1992; this year's total of 210 was nearly twice the previous record. And Wild Turkey numbers continue their seemingly inexorable increase. Our first bird was not found until 2002; this year we recorded 95 birds from eight areas.

We thank those who contributed to a very enjoyable and successful count, and invite everyone to mark a calendar for the next Oakland count: December 16, 2007. See you then!

by Dave Quady and Bob Lewis, co-compilers





## ATTRACTING BREEDING BIRDS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO ZOO

Savvy San Francisco birders are aware that the zoo is a good place to find rarities as well as some of the city's common resident species. A new program aims to increase the habitat value of the zoo's grounds for breeding birds.

One of the first steps is installing nesting boxes that mimic the tree cavities used by birds that breed in San Francisco. These birds rely on naturally occurring cavities or on cavities created by woodpeckers. Unfortunately, such cavities are in short supply. Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Winter Wrens, and Violet-Green Swallows, as well as locally rare Bewick's Wrens, are among the birds that the boxes might attract. An equally important part of the project is providing an opportunity for the public to observe the birds as they raise their young.

The boxes were installed in February, and now volunteers are needed to enhance the zoo's habitat by cleaning up the grounds and planting native vegetation. The next work party is scheduled for Sunday, March 11. The day begins at 9 a.m. with an orientation for new volunteers; work continues until 1 p.m. Volunteers should wear rubber boots or sturdy shoes, and bring rain pants or a change of clothes. (See schedule at right for meeting place.)

The project is a collaboration between Golden Gate Audubon and the San Francisco Zoo, with the assistance of Josiah Clark, Consulting Ecologist with Habitat Potential and also a member of GGA's San Francisco Conservation Committee.

### Make Your Earth Day Plans Now!

Celebrate Earth Day by volunteering with Golden Gate Audubon! We'll hold restoration work parties in conjunction with Earth Day on Saturday, April 21. Check out the Golden Gate Audubon website in mid-March or watch the April *Gull* for details.



Volunteers at Pier 94.

## GGA VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Do you appreciate the distinctive call of the California Quail and miss hearing it in San Francisco parks? Looking for a way to combine your love of gardening with conservation needs? Want to do your part to help restore habitat for endangered California Least Terns? Then become a volunteer with Golden Gate Audubon!

Volunteering is one of the best ways to enhance your experience of Bay Area birds and wildlife and to immerse yourself in the field of conservation. You can come to one, some, or all of the March and April events below. We'll even train you to participate in these and other volunteer activities at our spring volunteer orientation on March 15. For more information or for directions to any of the sites, contact Michael Martin, Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator at [mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org) or 510.843.7295.

**Saturdays, March 10 and April 14,  
9 a.m. – noon.**

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at the Presidio. Natural Resources Field Office, 1539 Pershing Dr., San Francisco.

**Sunday, March 11, 9 a.m. – noon.**

Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge workday. Main refuge gate at the northwest corner of the former Alameda Naval Air Station, Alameda. **Note:** Because of the upcoming California Least Tern nesting season, this is the last refuge workday until the fall.

**Sunday, March 11, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

San Francisco Zoo work party to enhance wildlife habitat (see article at left for more information). Entry Village, Lurie Education Center, 1 Zoo Rd., San Francisco.

**Thursday, March 15, 7 – 9 p.m.**

Volunteer Orientation Night. Buckley Room, Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

**Saturdays, March 17 and April 7,  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Native plant propagation for Pier 94 wetlands restoration. Literacy for Environmental Justice nursery, 1150 Carroll Ave., San Francisco.

**Wednesdays, March 21 and April 18,  
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park. Parking lot at the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd., San Francisco.

**Saturday, March 24, 9 a.m. – noon**

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park.



## SPEAKER SERIES

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator Susanne Shields. Speaker Series coordinator is Sarah Reed.

### Migratory Bird Conservation in Riparian Habitats in Monterey County

Nellie Thorngate

Berkeley: Thursday, March 15

Riparian habitat is the most important habitat for neotropical migrants, particularly in western North America. In California, only about 5 percent of historical riparian habitat remains, and much of that is threatened. Monterey County contains an estimated 36,000 acres of riparian habitat, used by more than 35 neotropical migrant land-bird species. The Ventana Wildlife Society is developing a migratory bird conservation program in Monterey County. Nellie Thorngate, a biologist with the society, will give an overview of avian abundance and diversity at seven sites in three of the county's major watersheds. Nellie will also outline suggestions for conservation, restoration, and management of riparian habitat that supports healthy neotropical migrant populations.

Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: [www.northbrae.org/directions.htm](http://www.northbrae.org/directions.htm)

### Ecological Effects of Introduced Turkeys in Sonoma Oak Woodlands

Daniel Gluesenkamp

San Francisco: Tuesday, March 27

Although Wild Turkeys are native to other parts of North America, they never successfully colonized California. The recent introduction and expansion of turkeys in the state create interesting research opportunities. In November 2002 Daniel Guesenkamp, director of Habitat Protection for Audubon Canyon Ranch, initiated the first experimental assessment of turkey impacts in California. His study evaluates the effect of turkeys on ground-dwelling invertebrates, acorn removal, and vegetation structure and composition. Daniel will present preliminary results that improve our understanding of introduced turkey ecology. He will also give an overview of the history and biology of California's introduced turkeys and describe research underway at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bouverie Preserve.

County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way.

Directions: [www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html)

## Joe Morlan's Spring Classes

The second sessions of Joe Morlan's three spring classes begin in late March. Endorsed by the Golden Gate Audubon Society, the classes meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. at Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore, San Francisco. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay Street. Fees are \$130 for each seven-week course. To enroll online, go to [www.evolvevww.com/ce/ccsf/](http://www.evolvevww.com/ce/ccsf/), or print out and fax the online registration form. For further information, call 415.561.1860.

Field Ornithology I,  
Part B (EA105)

Tuesdays,  
March 27 – May 22

Introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior.

Field Ornithology II,  
Part B (EA115)

Wednesdays,  
March 28 – May 23

In-depth study of the identification and status of North American birds, including falcons, grouse, quail, and rails.

Field Ornithology III,  
Part B (EA125)

Thursdays,  
March 29 – May 24

A continuing study of North American land birds, including nuthatches, gnatcatchers, wrens, kinglets, thrushes, and thrashers.

## Remember to Renew Your GGA Membership!

Last month you received a notice to renew your Supporting Membership with Golden Gate Audubon. If you've renewed already, thank you! Renewing your Supporting Membership early in the calendar year ensures that you won't miss a single issue of *The Gull* and that you'll continue to enjoy all of the other benefits, including a 10 percent discount on items purchased at our Nature Store, discounts on birding and other classes, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts.

If you haven't renewed your Supporting Membership yet, please do so soon! Your direct support of Golden Gate Audubon allows us to continue our vital conservation and education programs right here in the Bay Area.

If you aren't a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, we encourage you to join. Being a member of the National Audubon Society (NAS) does not automatically enroll you as a GGA Supporting Member. Although we are a NAS chapter, we are an independent organization with our own budget and membership. All of our activities, including field trips, Speaker Series, and environmental education programs, depend largely on our Supporting Members, whose dues directly fund our local efforts.

To renew your membership for 2007, just fill out and mail in the form you recently received in the mail. You can also renew—or join as a new member—online at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org), or you can call our office at 510.843.2222. Please join or renew today!





## FIELD TRIPS

Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org).

### Jewel Lake in Tilden Park

Berkeley

Friday, March 2, 8:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,  
[philajane6@msn.com](mailto:philajane6@msn.com)

Meet at Environmental Education Center parking lot at north end of Central Dr. for a walk around Jewel Lake to find winter residents as well as early spring arrivals. Depending on conditions, we might return to my home in Berkeley hills to see various sparrows and finches that come to my feeders. Trip ends at 10:30 or later depending on conditions. Rain cancels.

### San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, March 3, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis,  
SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF  
Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Trip is co-sponsored by Botanical Garden, SF Nature Education, and GGA.

### San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sunday, March 4, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley and Helen McKenna,  
415.566.3241

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. The garden's microhabitats attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds.



### San Francisco Bay Trail

Alameda County

Sunday, March 4, 9:30 a.m.

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after  
9 p.m.), [kathy\\_jarrett@yahoo.com](mailto:kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com)

Meet at San Leandro Marina trailhead on Monarch Bay Dr. at San Leandro Marina Park. We'll bicycle along Bay Trail to Hayward Shoreline Regional Park, making a 14-mile round-trip excursion. First part of trail is paved; remaining is easily negotiable. Dress for cool, windy weather;

helmet required. Bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels. Reservations not required but an email or call is appreciated.

**Transit:** Meet at San Leandro BART following 8:55 a.m. arrival of Richmond train. We will ride 3 miles on Williams St. bike lane to trailhead at end of Monarch Bay Dr. **Car:** Take Marina Blvd. west (exit from I-880) in San Leandro for 1.4 miles; turn left on Monarch Bay to end of last parking lot at San Leandro Marina Park on Williams St.

### Alcatraz Island

Thursday, March 8, 9:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Christian Hellwig, [christian\\_hellwig@nps.gov](mailto:christian_hellwig@nps.gov);  
Bob Lewis, 510.854.5001,  
[RLewis0727@aol.com](mailto:RLewis0727@aol.com)

This monthly trip is offered exclusively to GGA Supporting members. Participants must reserve a place on trip and purchase ferry tickets in advance. Trip is limited to 10 participants. Reserve a spot by contacting Tara Zuardo, GGA office manager, at 510.843.2222 or [ggas@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:ggas@goldengateaudubon.org). Once you have received confirmation, book your space on ferry with Alcatraz Cruises at 415.981.7625 or [www.alcatrazcruises.com](http://www.alcatrazcruises.com). Buy a ticket (\$21.75) for the 9:30 a.m. Early Bird Tour. Ferry departs from Pier 33 in San Francisco, near corner of Bay St. and Embarcadero. Field trip is timed so you can return on 11:15 a.m. boat, arriving at Pier 33 at 11:30. For more details, including seasonal Alcatraz birdlife and transit directions to Pier 33, see January-February *Gull*.

### Presidio

San Francisco

Sunday, March 11, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Matt Zlatunich; David Armstrong,  
[darmstrong99@yahoo.com](mailto:darmstrong99@yahoo.com), 514.584.6650  
(email preferred; no calls after 9 p.m.)

Meet at parking lot near former public health hospital just north of 15th Ave. and Lake St. We will cover approximately 7 miles on foot visiting diverse habitats of Presidio. Bring water and a snack; wear good shoes. Note: March 11 is first day of daylight savings time.



Entrance fee



Biking trip



Bob Lewis

Ruby-Crowned Kinglet.

### Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, March 16, 8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Bellingham; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, 415.554.9600  
ext. 16, [mgoodale@randallmuseum.org](mailto:mgoodale@randallmuseum.org)

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We'll enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring hilltop scrub and south cliff.

### Berkeley Waterfront

Sunday, March 18, 8:30 a.m. – noon

Anne Hoff, [anne2210b@sbcglobal.net](mailto:anne2210b@sbcglobal.net)

Meet behind Seabreeze Market, University Ave. and Eastshore Hwy. (west side of I-80). We'll visit Cesar Chavez Park and parts of the new Eastshore State Park, including the Berkeley Meadow. If time permits, we'll check out Aquatic Park. We can expect to see shorebirds, gulls, land birds, maybe a Burrowing Owl, and usually a surprise or two.

### San Francisco Bird Blitz

Saturday, March 24, 7 a.m. – dusk

Alan Hopkins, 415.664.0983, [ash@sfo.com](mailto:ash@sfo.com)

Meet at Crissy Field Center, Mason St. at Halleck St., in Presidio. We will caravan

to the city's best birding sites, including Golden Gate Park, Seal Rocks, Lake Merced, and McLaren Park, ending at Heron's Head Park in Hunters Point. This fast-paced trip usually yields more than 100 species. Afterward, we'll meet for dinner to tally the day's sightings. Bring lunch, snacks, and liquids. Carpooling is highly recommended.

### SF Birds at Merrie Way

Sunday, March 25, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363,  
anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at Merrie Way, the unpaved parking lot at west end of Pt. Lobos above Cliff House at Land's End. Local birds will be nesting, including Pygmy Nuthatches and Red-tailed Hawks resident at Sutro Heights. We should hear the spring songs of finches, sparrows, and warblers. Pigeon Guillemot should be back. Email leader for transit information.

### Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, March 28, 9 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,  
hiliary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,  
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net;  
Travis Hails, travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. We will bird area near center, then go down to lake toward Embarcadero, or up path to Children's Fairyland.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Drivers can park on Bellevue, east of Perkins, within about 3 blocks of meeting place. Parking on Grand Ave. is metered; meters can be fed during walk. Parking at boathouse lot near Nature Center will cost \$3 for entry to access road.

### Point Reyes National Seashore

Marin County

Saturday, March 31, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936,  
rfscalf@sbcglobal.net

Meet at Five Brooks Pond. We will walk around pond, then visit Olema Marsh, Bear Valley Visitor Center, and Limantour Beach. Bring lunch and liquids. Email Rusty for details. For locations and directions, look at the online map: <http://www.nps.gov/pore/planyourvisit/index.htm>.

## Don't Miss GGA's Birdiest City Competition

You still have time to sign up for the seventh annual America's Birdiest City/County Competition. This year, Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring San Francisco's entry in the event. For the contest, participants will document the most species within the city's boundaries in a 72-hour period, competing with other birders in the Small Coastal City category.

Last year, Dauphin Island, Alabama, placed first in this category, with 170 species recorded. San Francisco's large avian diversity makes it possible to achieve similar results—if enough birders volunteer to participate. To maximize the potential number of species seen, our count will be held from 9 a.m. Friday, April 13, to 9 a.m., Monday, April 16, with the bulk of activity taking place on Saturday and Sunday. This should allow teams to find lingering winter birds, uncommon residents, and early spring arrivals.

Participants will be assigned specific areas to cover in the time slot(s) for which they register. We encourage birders of all skill levels to sign up; the more pairs of eyes in the field, the better! There is no charge to take part. If you're a beginner, you'll be teamed up with a more experienced observer. You can sign up for one or more four-hour count periods at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org) or by calling 510.843.2222.

### Quarry Lakes, Alameda Creek, Coyote Hills

Alameda County

Saturday, March 31

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after 9 p.m.), [kathy\\_jarrett@yahoo.com](mailto:kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com)

Meet at 8:20 a.m. on east side of Fremont BART station at Tule Pond, adjacent to parking lot. Approximate distance is 24 miles on mostly paved bike trails with very little uphill. We'll visit riparian, marsh, and bayside habitats. On previous trips we've seen 50–60 species. Plan for a picnic lunch at Coyote Hills Visitors Center. Dress for cool, windy weather; helmet required. Rain cancels. Reservations not required, but an email or call is appreciated.

**Transit:** Meet on east side of Fremont BART at Tule Pond following 8:17 a.m. arrival of Richmond train.  
**Car:** Take I-880 to Fremont. Exit on Mowry Ave. toward central Fremont. Go 2.3 miles on Mowry to east side of BART past Civic Center Dr.

### Mines Road

Alameda County

Saturday, April 28, 8 a.m.

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,  
[davequady@att.net](mailto:davequady@att.net)

Trip will begin in Livermore and end there in early evening, with opportunities to end earlier if the group chooses. We expect to see Lewis's Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and Bullock's Oriole; Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, and Golden Eagle are among other possibilities. Bring food and liquids for a full day. Trip is limited to first 20 participants who reserve with leader; early sign-up is recommended. Carpooling is encouraged to and from Livermore, and is essential during the day because of limited parking along route. Leader will provide directions and carpooling information to those confirmed on trip.

### Texas Coast Migration Spectacle

April 21–27

For this six-day trip at peak migration time, Golden Gate Audubon will partner with highly respected tour company Field Guides. The 2006 bird list for this Field Guides offering totaled 203 species. Jesse Fagan, tour leader, has birded in Texas for many years. Fee is \$1,450, plus a \$150 tax-deductible contribution to GGA. The trip is limited to eight participants. For further information, contact Ruth Tobey at 510.528.2093 or [ruthtobey@earthlink.net](mailto:ruthtobey@earthlink.net)



All in all, both Brandi and I enjoyed our lobbying experiences. "Meeting with the staff of our representatives was an exhilarating experience," she said. "As constituents (and Audubon members), we came away from our representative's and senators' offices feeling empowered that our message had been delivered to the people in power to change legislation."

by Michael C. Martin, Volunteer and  
Membership Development Coordinator

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

National Audubon holds a series of "citizen lobbyist" trainings on topics ranging from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the federal budget process each year. If you're interested in attending one of these trainings, go to the National Audubon website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org), sign up for the AudubonAction newsletter at <http://audubonaction.org>, or contact me at 510.843.7295 or [mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org).

## Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

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### IN MEMORY OF

**Norman "Ike" Livermore Jr.:** Marjorie Blyth Bell, Mrs. A. Witter

### IN HONOR OF

**Ann Witter:** Susan Witter  
**Adam & Lydia Irving:** Judy Irving  
**Rudy & Nellie Lingenfelder:** Edwin & Roberta Anderson

### GRANTS

**The San Francisco Foundation, Donor Advised Fund:** Wetlands & Wildlands  
**San Francisco Estuary Project:** Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program  
**Environmental Protection Agency:** Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program





**M**ost months, news of a Snowy Owl in SOL would be the top-of-the-fold headline. But this month, the Snowy Owl was upstaged by a male Smew (*Mergellus albellus*), discovered east of Soulsbyville (TUO) on Jan. 20 (SU). It remained on location off and on through the 29th, cruising a pond in the company of Hooded Mergansers. Inspired by Luke Cole's 2000 classic *Do You, Too, Rue Smew?*, this Asian taiga denizen prompted an outpouring of Seussian doggerel from satisfied and frustrated birders. If accepted, this would be just the third CA record.

### LOONS TO DUCKS

Two male Harlequin Ducks remained in residence at the Coyote Pt. Marina, SM (MD; ADM, KS), and 2 more were observed near Mile Rock, SF, on the 6th (AH). Up to 3 Long-tailed Ducks were overwintering in Princeton Harbor in Half Moon Bay, SM (DN; mob). Scattered Long-tailed reports were also noted from Oster Pt. Marina, S. SF, SM (RT); Loch Lomond Marina in San Rafael, MRN (BB; EDB) and from the Amtrak train at Pinole's Bayfront Park, CC (KS; LL).

### RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

One or more Northern Goshawks made surprising appearances in SF, first on Dec. 18 over Julius Kahn Playground in the Presidio (JC, AK) and then on Jan. 15 at Fort Miley (DM). The lack of storm surges this winter limited the high-tide rail watching opportunities, but a canoeist located a Black Rail on Dec. 29 on Ellis Cr. in Petaluma, SON (DE). Oakland's Arrowhead Marsh (ALA) produced a Black Rail on Jan. 19 (BC).

A large Mountain Plover flock remained in eastern SOL and a couple birds turned up in Sonoma, SON, Jan. 11 (DS). Coyote Cr. Golf Course (SCL) attracted a Solitary Sandpiper to a muddy pond on Dec. 30 (MM; MR, EDB, MD), while the Half Moon Bay Golf Course (SM) hosted a Rock Sandpiper below the 18th tee through Jan. 17 (GD; mob).

Venice SB in Half Moon Bay, SM,



Joe Morlan

Snowy Owl, first seen in late December 2006 in Grizzly Bay, Solano County, and photographed by Joe Morlan in mid-January 2007.

remains the preeminent gull-watching destination, with reports of 1 or more Slaty-backed Gulls (*Larus schistisagus*) starting Dec. 7 (RT, AJ; mob) and up to 5 Glaucous Gulls in Jan. (RT; AJ). Gull watchers could ill afford to ignore the S. Bay Salt Ponds (SCL), which featured a 1st-winter Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*) at Pond A16 on Jan. 10 (PK, RK, BRe) and 2 or 3 Glaucous Gulls throughout Jan. (BRe; mob). Solo Glaucous Gulls were reported in Jan. at Sutro Baths, SF (JM; mob); Auto Mall Parkway, Fremont, ALA (MB); San Leandro Marina, ALA (BRi); and Drake's Beach Visitor's Center, PRNS, MRN (RS). Black-legged Kittiwakes were noted off the SF coastline on Dec. 7 and Jan. 10 (BF, PS).

### DOVES TO THRASHERS

On Dec. 30, an email to the Coastsides Fishing Club discussion boards noted a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) on the shore of Grizzly Bay, SOL (CS; mob). The owl was located on Gum Tree Duck Club property, which precluded land access to the site. A cottage industry of boat trips quickly emerged to ferry the admiring hordes to see the bird, which remained in the area through Jan. 22. Analysis by JM has determined that this bird is probably not the same one that visited SOL in 2006.

Dec. brought Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers to Ed Levin Park, SCL (mob), and Newhall Park in Concord, CC (SG; LL), while Jan. featured a Red-naped Sapsucker at Sunol RP, ALA (BD; KR, MF). Townsend's Solitaires showed up on Mt Tamalpais, MRN, on Dec. 7 (DMK), and at Stiles Ranch, SCL, on the 30th (GH).

### WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

An American Tree Sparrow added interest to a high-tide visit to Waldo's Dike, MRN, on Dec. 3 (DN, CC). Immature Harris's Sparrows were noted at Gazos Cr., SM, on Dec. 10 (GS) and at Petaluma-Adobe State Historic Park, SON, through Jan. (LH; mob). A birder sighted a Lapland Longspur near the SM Bridge, SM, on Jan. 12 (JS). Finally, on Jan. 13–19, a Scott's Oriole in GGP, SF, prompted an online debate about the correct spelling of "Hippy Hill" (AH, EDB; mob).

See Birding Resources at [www.goldengateaudubon.org/birdingresources.htm](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org/birdingresources.htm) for complete sightings list.

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

**Abbreviations for Observers:** AP, Andy Pedler, ADM, Al DeMartini, AE, Art Edwards; AH, Alan Hopkins; AJ, Al Jaramillo; AK, Andy Kleinhesselink; BB, Bob Battagin; BC, Bill Clark; BD, Bob Dunn; BF, Brian Fitch, BRe, Bob Reiling, BRi, Bob Richmond, CC, Chris Conard, CH, Cullen Hanks; CS, Charles A. Strickland; CW, Charley Walker; DE, Daniel Edelstein; DM, Dominik Mosur; DMK, Dave MacKenzie, DN, David Nelson; DS, Doug Shaw; DW, Dave Wimpfheimer, EDB, Ed DeBellevue; FT, Francis Toldi; GD, Gary Deghi; GH, Garth Harwood; GS, Gary Strachan; HC, Hugh Cotter, JC, Josiah Clark; JM, Joe Morlan; JM, Joseph Morlan; JMK, Kevin McKereghan, JP, Janna Pauser; JRB, JR Blair; JS, John Sterling; JT, Jim Thomas; KR, Kathy Robertson; KS, Ken Schneider, KS, Kirk Swenson, LH, Lisa Hug, LL, Laura Look; MB, Marc Better; MD, Matthew Dodder, MF, Mike Feighner, MM, Michael Mammoser, MR, Mike Rogers, PD, Peter Dramer; PK, Pat Kenny; PLT, Pete La Tourrette, PS, Paul Saraceni; RC, Rob Caldwell; RK, Roland Kenner, RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; RW, Ron Wolf; SG, Steve Glover; SU, Steven Umland

**Abbreviations for Counties and Others:** ALA, Alameda, CBC, Christmas Bird Count, CBRC, California Bird Records Committee; CC, Contra Costa; CCFs, Coyote Creek Field Station, CP, County Park; Cr., Creek, Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park, IMP, Imperial, L., Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount, N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve, PRBO, Pt Reyes Bird Observatory, PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; TUO, Tuolumne; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

# Decades of CBCs Reveal Trends in Local Species



May Woon

Northern Pintail.

Ornithologist Frank Chapman organized the first Christmas Bird Count on Christmas Day, 1900. Thirteen years later, ornithologist William Dawson and bird artist Allan Brooks became the first team to top 100 when they got 106 species in San Diego County. In the Bay Area, Berkeley was first to have a CBC, in 1914. The next year, San Francisco had its first count. Oakland joined the CBC in 1939. Hayward was a latecomer in 1968; southern Marin even later, in 1975.

Species abundance has changed significantly over the many decades of Bay Area CBCs. A general trend: Egrets, herons, buteos, corvids, and invasive species have all increased in numbers. In the case of increasing native species, protective laws have prevented the old shoot-on-sight predation by humans. Golden Gate Park once had a professional hunter paid to shoot all hawks and corvids. Egrets are no longer killed for their plumes. Introduced birds that are thriving include the European Starling, Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, and House Sparrow. It appears that the Eurasian Collared-Dove will join their ranks. The native Mourning Dove has increased dramatically since the early counts, which often showed none.

Perhaps no native species' population change is more dramatic than the Common Raven's. In 1943 University of California ornithologist Joseph Grinnell reported the

bird "scarce or absent in all settled parts of the state." He would be amazed to see the dozens of young ravens that hang out with surfers everyday at Ocean Beach, showing up by the dozens in the San Francisco CBC.

The Peregrine Falcon and Brown Pelican populations have recovered. The first four San Francisco counts (1915–18) had a total of four Brown Pelicans. Oakland's 1955 total was 29, a record that stood until 1972 when DDT was banned. Today that would be anemic. Oakland had 1,870 pelicans in 2005, a record count.

Some of the changing species counts are due to obvious habitat changes. San Francisco first recorded Pygmy Nuthatches in 1984 following a two-decade hiatus in the San Francisco count (1964–83). The planted evergreen forests in the Presidio and Golden Gate Park matured, and Pygmy Nuthatches moved in as the Red-breasted Nuthatches decreased. This may also account for the increase in Steller's Jays and Townsend's Warblers in San Francisco.

Besides the parrots of Telegraph Hill, other birds adapted to gardens and parks have increased. The first Northern Mockingbird was seen in San Francisco in 1932. Oakland had two on the 1947 CBC, and the numbers have increased over the decades. Restoration of Crissy Lagoon, begun in 1997, has brought obvious changes in the San Francisco count,

attracting Wilson's Snipe and other shorebirds. Establishing bayshore parks like Arrowhead Marsh and protecting the old Alameda Naval Air Station preserve habitat used by grassland and salt marsh birds in the East Bay.

Sadly, many species counts are down over the decades. As recently as 1979, Oakland had 25 Burrowing Owls. Is there any hope that number will ever again climb into double digits? In the 19th century, the Burrowing Owl was abundant. A steady decline has also befallen the Loggerhead Shrike. Canvasbacks and Northern Pintails were dominant in the early count numbers. Both have diminished sharply. As recently as 1972, Hayward had 7,000 Canvasbacks. Oakland has not topped 160 this century after reporting 22,000 in 1955 and nearly 10,000 in 1960. Loss of breeding habitat across the North American prairies may be the cause.

One of the saddest stories has been the collapse of the Bay Area's California Quail population. We all know the tenuous survival of the few San Francisco birds. Oakland had over 800 as recently as 1981. The next year there was a crash and no recovery. Oakland had fewer than 190 every count this century.

The long-term impact of climate change may be affecting the CBC. In the past 20 years, it is no longer rare to find overwintering warblers: Hermit, Orange-crowned in increasing abundance, Yellow, and Black-and-white. A future CBC may report a wintering Hooded Oriole or a hardy flock of Barn Swallows. Local CBCs now are decidedly more thorough, and the number of vagrants or rarities seems to have increased.

The CBC database is rich. Do some of your own research by going to [http://audubon2.org/birds/cbc/hr/count\\_table.html](http://audubon2.org/birds/cbc/hr/count_table.html).

by Harry Fuller

This is the first in a series of articles on topics related to Golden Gate Audubon's 90th anniversary. Harry Fuller, a professional birding guide, is a longtime Golden Gate Audubon field trip leader and instructor. His website ([www.towhee.net](http://www.towhee.net)) contains a wealth of information on his trips and classes as well as on birding in the Bay Area and beyond.





# BIRDING CLASSES

## Spring Classes in the East Bay

Three GGA-sponsored classes are offered through Albany Adult School. Register online at [www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult/birding.html](http://www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult/birding.html) or by calling 510.559.6580.

### Bay Area Birds

Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis

Wednesdays, April 4 – May 16, 7 – 8 p.m. (except April 11),  
plus five Saturday or Sunday field trips (except April 7 – 8),  
plus one weekend-long trip May 19 – 20

Springtime brings many of our nesting birds back from the tropics, while shorebirds acquire their breeding plumage and head for the Arctic. Join an enthusiastic group to learn more about our local birds.

### Birding by Ear

Denise Wight

Wednesdays, April 18 – May 9, 7 – 8:30 p.m.,  
plus four three-hour Saturday field trips

With birds in full song, spring is the perfect time to learn some of our local songsters. We'll listen to birdsongs in class and visit various habitats for a full range of the songs we hear in the Bay Area.

### Identification and Conservation of Bay Area Wildflowers

Lech Naumovich

Tuesdays, May 1 – 29, 7 – 8:30 p.m.,  
plus five three-hour Saturday field trips

Learn about various habitats, plant taxonomy, plant identification, and conservation challenges in the Bay Area from the conservation director for the California Native Plant Society. A highly recommended \$30 book fee is payable to the instructor.

### Tales of Western Ornithologists

Harry Fuller

Friday, April 20, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Live Oak Recreation Center, Berkeley  
Fee: \$10, GGA Supporting Members;  
\$15, nonmembers. Register by calling  
the GGA office, 510.843.2222

Wilson's Warbler, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Townsend's Warbler, Steller's Jay, Heermann's Gull, Bewick's Wren, Cassin's Finch—how did some of our favorite birds acquire their names? Behind these and other names are some fascinating stories. Harry Fuller will share his extensive knowledge of ornithological history, including the tangled tale of Anna's Hummingbird and what happened after an Italian surgeon on a French ship took the first specimen back to Europe from San Francisco. You'll hear about the man who made it to Alaska but died before he got home again; the couple who never saw America where their namesake birds live; and the man who appears as a character in *Two Years Before the Mast*.

#### SAN FRANCISCO CBC from page 1

Western Tanager, and Orchard Oriole, were all species that might be expected to be wintering far to the south. Overwintering species at the edges of their respective ranges included Cackling Goose, Red-necked Grebe, Nuttall's Woodpecker, House Wren, Oak Titmouse, and Swamp Sparrow.

The San Francisco CBC continues to provide a window on the continuing decline of coastal scrub and oak woodland species like California Quail, Western Screech-Owl, Hutton's Vireo, Bewick's Wren, Wrentit, and Spotted Towhee.

Of particular note were observations of Allen's Hummingbird and Bullock's Oriole the day following the count week.

For complete count numbers, go to [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/) and click on "Current Year's Results."

Our thanks go to the 103 participants, the Golden Gate Audubon Society, and the Presidio Trust for making this count possible.

by Dan Murphy, Alan Hopkins, and Joan Murphy, co-compilers



Hammond's Flycatcher seen on CBC day at Sharps Park Golf Course.

Calvin Lou

But when the county renewed the industry's permits in September 2005, the new permit conditions failed to guarantee enough protection for birds. Golden Gate Audubon, along with the Ohlone, Santa Clara Valley, Mount Diablo, and Marin Audubon chapters, sued the county under the California Environmental Quality Act for approving the 13-year conditional use permits at Altamont Pass without conducting an environmental review.

Today, thanks to our efforts, the wind companies must act immediately to cut the bird kills at Altamont Pass by half, and they have committed to working with the

California Department of Fish and Game, Golden Gate Audubon, and other groups to craft a plan that will further reduce bird kills at Altamont Pass over the long term.

The settlement will force the wind industry to decrease raptor mortality by 50 percent at Altamont Pass by November 2009. It also requires companies to remove the deadliest turbines for the birds and to continue wintertime shutdowns of the wind resource area. If the companies fail to achieve the 50 percent mortality reduction within three years, they must implement new actions, guided by the county's Scientific Review Committee, to ensure that they reduce bird kills by half of current levels.

Under the agreement, the wind industry is committed to crafting a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP)—a comprehensive conservation planning process aimed at minimizing and mitigating ongoing bird kills at Altamont. One of the biggest challenges in resolving the egregious bird kills is scientific uncertainty about how best to reduce bird mortality at wind farms. The long-term planning process will allow Golden Gate Audubon to work with the industry to find effective solutions to the avian mortality crisis, based on emerging science. Most importantly, it will require the endorsement of both the state Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service. Helping to craft this agreement will be a significant focus for our staff over the coming months.

Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet that solves the avian mortality problem and also supports continued wind-energy production at Altamont Pass. Nonetheless, the settlement agreement is a significant improvement over the 2005 permits granted by the county and promises much stronger protections for birds, both in the immediate relief it provides for Altamont's birds and in its ability to address the ongoing avian mortality over the years to come.

As with all hard-won conservation victories, our success at Altamont Pass was a collaborative effort. We extend our special thanks to our attorney, Bill Yeates, and to our former conservation director, Samantha Murray, for their expert work. We also thank the Audubon chapters that participated in the lawsuit—Ohlone, Mount Diablo, Santa Clara Valley, and Marin—for their support, as well as Audubon California, especially Julia Levin, Audubon California State Policy Director. Finally, we thank all of our generous supporters, especially those who have made extraordinary contributions that enabled us to achieve this success and continue to make this critical work possible.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

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